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# Who Was the Fadiyār?

## Conflating Textual Evidence in Judeo-Arabic and Old Malayalam

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### *Abstract\**

The term *fadiyār* occurs in Judeo-Arabic letters found in the Cairo Geniza. The letters were exchanged between Jewish traders who were active in the Indian Ocean maritime trade between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. While it is understood in reference to a shipowner, its derivation remains obscure. The present paper traces the derivation of the term in the official title *pati* that appears in the Kollam copper plates, a ninth-century royal inscription in Old Malayalam from South India. Despite the time, place and language differences between the Kollam copper plates and the Geniza letters, both sources originate in the context of maritime trade networks in the Indian Ocean thus justifying conflating them for tracing the derivation of the term *fadiyār* in the term *pati*. Moreover, conflating the two sources opens new vistas to the study of the shared history, geography and economy of Southwest and Southeast Asia during the centuries preceding European expansion in the region.

### *Introduction*

The Kollam copper plates are a royal grant inscribed in the Old Malayalam *vaṭṭezuttu* script. It is one of the earliest documents in Malayalam dated 849 CE and, as such, it is an important document for the study of Kerala history and the evolution of Malayalam language.<sup>1</sup> The inscription attests a land grant near the medieval port town Kollam (Quilon); it was presented by a local Hindu king to an East Syriac Christian merchant.<sup>2</sup> Like the Geniza letters of Jewish traders along the Indian Ocean trade routes, the Kollam copper plates have been scrutinized by scholars for reconstructing the history of the premodern maritime trade networks in the Indian Ocean.<sup>3</sup> Words of foreign origins appear in both sources, with scholars tracing them back to languages hailing from the other side of the Indian Ocean: West Asian names and terms in the

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Old Malayalam copper-plate inscription on the one hand and, South Indian names and terms in the Judeo-Arabic letters on the other hand. Few scholars, however, have ventured into a holistic scrutiny of the sources for viewing them against each other as Elizabeth Lambourn demonstrates in her studies. Lambourn incorporates South Indian history and language into the study of Geniza letters and, similarly, incorporates West Asian history and language into the study of the Kollam copper plates.<sup>4</sup> Besides the holistic view of the sources across regions towards what Sanjay Subrahmaniam termed as ‘connected histories’,<sup>5</sup> Lambourn calls for incorporating historical linguistics into the history of Indian Ocean maritime trade based on the geography and economy shared between regions and communities across the long-distance trade routes. Historical linguistics in the study of transregional exchange as reflected in Jewish texts was first implemented by Chaim Rabin, who traced Tamil and Sanskrit loanwords in the Bible and Talmud.<sup>6</sup> Shlomo Dov Goitein and Mordechai Akiva Friedman too refer to Indian and Persian words in the letters.<sup>7</sup> Lambourn, besides implementing South Indian historical linguistics to the study of Genizah letters, goes beyond the conventional (if not conservative) references to words in Sanskrit and Classical Tamil that must have had a limited scope of influence on the lexicon of traders, let alone Arabic-speakers. There is, it seems, much more to unearth in consulting South Indian vernaculars in the study of the Judeo-Arabic Geniza letters.

Conflating trade-related documents such as the Old Malayalam copper plates and the Judeo-Arabic Geniza letters is potentially a powerful magnifying glass into otherwise hidden social realities of transregional maritime communities. The Kollam copper plates are uniquely the most important South Indian document in this context of connected histories; it has *both* South Indian and West Asian scripts engraved on it. When attempting to conflate the Judeo-Arabic letters with South Indian sources, the Kollam copper plates are the most adequate historical document because it is possibly the only document in an Indian language alongside Hebrew characters. It is only much later in the late seventeenth century that the Hebrew script is again documented in Kerala.<sup>8</sup> Certainly other South Indian inscriptions and literary sources are important in conflating West and Southeast Asian sources. Still, the Kollam copper plates are possibly the only document with straightforward attestation of Jewish presence in the Malayalam-speaking region during such an early period.

*Revisiting the Kollam Copper Plates*

The Kollam copper plates are a royal grant of land and trade privileges granted by Ayyaṇ Aṭikaḷ Tiruvaṭikaḷ to Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso in Kollam (Quilon) in 849 CE.<sup>9</sup> Ayyaṇ Aṭikaḷ was a local ruler subordinate to the Cera king of Veṇāṭu, Sthāṇu Ravi Varmaṇ. His title Tiruvaṭikaḷ must have been hereditary as it is mentioned also much later by Ibn Baṭūṭṭah (ca. 1345) as Tirawari “Sultan of the infidels” in Kollam.<sup>10</sup> The beneficiary of the grant, Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso, was a Christian merchant acting on behalf of the medieval trade guilds *añcuvāṇṇam* and *maṇigrāmam*, as attested in the inscription in several places (see below). The witnesses to the grant sign their names in Kufic, Pahlavi and Judeo-Persian. There are Muslims, Christians and Zoroastrians among the signatories in Kufic and Pahlavi, while the Judeo-Persian signatories must all be Jews as it is unlikely that a non-Jew will sign his name in the Hebrew script. Kollam, the place of issue of the grant, was a coastal port town known in Judeo-Arabic as Kūlam (כולם) and in Hebrew as Qaulam (קאולם).<sup>11</sup>

The Kollam copper plates precede the Geniza letters of India traders by approximately 250 years, possibly a forerunner of what was to become an ongoing exchange of goods and people between Aden and the Malabar Coast that persisted up to the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The same trade guilds mentioned in the copper plates – *añcuvāṇṇam* and *maṇigrāmam* – resurface much later, in the *Ballad of Payyannūr* roughly dated to the fourteenth century.<sup>13</sup> These trade guilds are known also from inscriptions and sources in Tamil and other Indian languages, though *añcuvāṇṇam* is more typically associated with West Asian traders along the Malabar Coast.<sup>14</sup> The derivation of the terms substantiates the disparate regional association of the two guilds; the term *añcuvāṇṇam*, is a Persian loanword *anjuman*, ‘organization’,<sup>15</sup> while *maṇigrāmam* is derived from the Sanskrit compound *vaṇig-grāmam*, ‘traders-guild’.<sup>16</sup> As far as I am aware of, the term *añcuvāṇṇam* finds no correlates in the Geniza letters.<sup>17</sup> Contrarily, for the term *maṇigrāmam*, a probable correlate is *bānyān*, especially in the plural form denoting a group of Indian merchants –*bānyāniyyīn*.<sup>18</sup> Despite the phonetic difference, the plural form in Judeo-Arabic indicates a reference to a group of merchants that possibly reflects the concept of a guild as perceived on the eastern shores of the Arabian Sea.

The inscription deals with exemption from taxes and a grant of lands including tenant-laborers to the above-mentioned merchant guilds *añcuvāṇṇam* and *maṇigrāmam* represented by Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso. The grant requires the consent of a group of local rulers, as it involves the

establishment of a community of traders signified by the term *paḷḷi*, which is further modified by the term *tarisā*, derived from New Early Persian *tarsā*, ‘Christian’.<sup>19</sup> The grant further prescribes the donation of oil to the *paḷḷi*, which, coupled with its designation as Christian, leads to the assumption that the grant signifies the founding of a church in Kollam.<sup>20</sup>

It is unclear, though, whether in the ninth century the term *paḷḷi* was necessarily and primarily denoting a place of worship, let alone a Christian church. Arguably, *paḷḷi* might have primarily signified a settlement or a small market town, rather than the establishment of a Christian mission. Himanshu Prabhu Ray<sup>21</sup> lists *paḷḷi* as one of the common terms to denote a market town in premodern Gujarat; in both Tamil and Malayalam the definition of *paḷḷi* includes the meaning of a village or settlement.<sup>22</sup> The term *paḷḷi* exists in Sanskrit too as *pallī*, with the same meaning of a small village or settlement.<sup>23</sup> It is therefore quite possible that the context of the transaction was primarily secular, for the individuals and institutions involved in the agreement were of diverse religious, occupational and ethnic backgrounds, both as beneficiaries and as donors. Moreover, the concern with maintaining religious obligations to the *paḷḷi* is rather laconic compared with the detailed list of socioeconomic regulations that comprise the bulk of the text, suggesting that the inscription is largely about socioeconomic measures regulating the interactions between local rulers and West Asian merchants, regardless of their religious affiliations. Remarkably, the individual who established the Tarissāppaḷḷi, Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso, is attributed an *earlier* consecration of an adjacent market town (*i-nnagaram kaṇṭu nīrērra*), as stated twice in the inscription (plate 2, side 1, lines 17-18; plate 3, side 2, line 61).<sup>24</sup> It therefore seems plausible to assume that the Tarissāppaḷḷi functioned as an extension of the *nagaram* and as a secular socioeconomic initiative involving multi-religious and transregional groups of merchants and administrators.<sup>25</sup>

The professed Christian identity of the Tarissāppaḷḷi opens up a host of questions regarding the nature of the agreement and its historical background: who were the Christians who constituted the church community? Were the land tenants (*Īzavar*, *Vaṇār*, *Veḷḷāḷar*, *Taccar* and *Eruviyar*), who were granted along with the land, converted to Christianity? If so, why would Muslim, Zoroastrian and Jewish signatories participate in establishing a Christian church in Malabar? Notably, at the time, Christian monasteries in the Persian Gulf, possibly centuries-old outposts for Christian traders, were abandoned, presumably due to the spread of Islam in the region.<sup>26</sup>

Leaving aside speculations about the motivations of the various individuals involved in the agreement, it is important to note that except for identifying three witnesses as Zoroastrians and four Jews (who signed their names in the Hebrew script), the signatories remain unidentified for their religious affiliation; they were definitely Arabic and Persian speakers, and some of them have names that could be Muslim, Christian or Jewish.<sup>27</sup>

The markers of Christian identity in the inscription itself are, to my opinion, minor in comparison with the social, political and ethnic significations conveyed by names, scripts and titles. Indeed, the beneficiary of the grant and the founder of the Tarissāppaḷḷi, Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso is undoubtedly a Christian, as is clear from the appellation Īso (the Eastern Christian name for Jesus). It is also clear that he is of a Persian origin, as the name Maruvāṇ is derived from Persian Mehervan.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the grant was preserved albeit divided into two by Syrian Christian institutions in Kottayam and Thiruvalla, and Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso is regarded as the founder of a church in Kollam according to early modern traditions.<sup>29</sup> It is possible, of course, that the land tenants constituted the first Christian converts in Malabar, but the text remains silent about conversion and simply states the occupational affiliations of the laborers who were granted along with the land:

Two families of salt-makers and one family of carpenters and four families of farmers - the tenants that belong to the land – all of them should provide without deficiency the debt required for the *paḷḷi*, for oil etc. after they sow what is to be sown and plant that which is to be planted before God.<sup>30</sup>

More than attesting the establishment of Christianity in Malabar, the inscription provides evidence for the earliest settlement nodes of West Asian merchants in the region, before the emergence of distinctively religious monotheist communities. This is important, because when conflated with textual evidence prior to the sixteenth century, the evidence for Muslim communities striking roots in Malabar is by far more abundant than that for Christians.<sup>31</sup>

That the grant had the religious affiliation of the beneficiaries blurred is also suggested by the usage of the term *paḷḷiyār* (the *paḷḷi* community members) as unspecified for caste, ethnic or religious identity. Moreover, while the place name Kurakkeṇi Kollam is generally associated with Kollam,<sup>32</sup> the exact location of the Tarissāppaḷḷi as described in the copper-plate grant remains unidentified, suggesting the community associated with it in the ninth century did not

strike roots as a founding Christian establishment. The term *paḷḷi* is mentioned in other early medieval inscriptions in reference to a village with no specific religious affiliation.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the term *paḷḷiyār* has been associated with Buddhists and Jains in Malayalam literature even as late as the fourteenth century.<sup>34</sup> It is therefore questionable how far the inscription and the grant concern the advent of Christianity to the Malabar Coast.

Conflated with the Geniza letters, the Kollam copper-plate grant makes better sense in the broader context of Indian Ocean maritime activities, where religious affiliations and concerns give way to pragmatic trade collaborations. Thus, Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo of the Kollam copper plates can be seen as a focal character in a network of Arabic and Persian merchants, among them Jews, who signed their names in the Hebrew script. These merchants must have pioneered what later became a well-established network of Jews, Muslims and Hindus as attested in the Geniza letters. Indeed, some 150 years later, a copper-plate grant was bestowed on Joseph Rabban (*īssuppu irappāṇ*), presumably a Jew, by king Bhaskara Ravi Varmaṇ in Muziris (*muyirikkōṭṭ*), some 180 kilometers north of Kollam. This inscription is conventionally associated with Jewish settlers despite the lack of concrete evidence that Joseph Rabban was a Jew.<sup>35</sup> Similar to his predecessor, Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo, Joseph Rabban represents a merchant guild, the *añcuvannam*, this time without the *mañigrāmam* organization though. Unlike the Kollam copper plates, the so-called Jewish copper-plate grant bears no testimony for the use of Hebrew or any other West Asian script. Moreover, the privileges conferred upon Joseph Rabban are not as detailed as in the Kollam grant and, perhaps most importantly, Joseph Rabban receives no land or tenant-laborers. Contrarily, the West Asian traders associated with the *tarissāppaḷḷi* of the Kollam copper plates clearly belong to a merchant community inclusive of local artisans and land tenants and established by the Nestorian Christian merchant.<sup>36</sup> The Muyirikkōṭṭ inscription provides more evidence for the gradual emergence of the Indian Ocean networks of West Asian merchants collaborating with each other and with the local rulers regardless of ethnic or religious differences. However, it has very little information to add in the attempt to conflate textual evidence in Malayalam and Judeo-Arabic. The much more detailed Kollam copper plates, on the other hand, do contain textual evidence that seems to be echoed in the Judeo-Arabic India traders' letters, like the Malayalam term *mañigrāmam* echoed by the Judeo-Arabic terms *bānyāniyyinūn*.

As stated above, the West Asian merchants must have been members of the trade guilds *añcuvannam* and *mañigrāmam*. Importantly, they are explicitly entitled in the Kollam copper plates to a tenth (*patavāram*) of their land-tenants' lease (*kārāṇmai*), a share equal to that of the ruler (*koyil*). Specifically, the grant attributes the share of the merchant guilds as that which belongs to the *pati*, or village chief (*patippatavāram*).<sup>37</sup> In what follows, I offer a possible derivation from the Old Malayalam title *pati* to the Judeo-Arabic term FDY'R (פדיאר), understood by Goitein and Friedman as a loanword referring to Indian shipowners networking with the Jewish and Muslim merchants of Aden during the twelfth century.

### *The Phonemic Derivation from Pati to FDY'R*

According to Goitein and Friedman, FDY'R is a title that was used in reference to one (or more) of the shipowners associated with the Jewish businessmen from Aden; in all occurrences of the term, it is clear from the context that FDY'R is similar in usage to the title *fatansomi* (< *paṭṭaṇasvāmi*), 'Chief of the Bazaar', used to refer to one (or more) of the South Indian shipowners.<sup>38</sup> While *paṭṭaṇasvāmi* is a term known from South Indian epigraphy,<sup>39</sup> FDY'R remains obscure with no known equivalent in any language with which Judeo-Arabic was known to be in contact like Persian or Middle Indic languages. Arguably, the term *pati* which is mentioned in the Kollam copper plates and in other inscriptions from medieval Kerala<sup>40</sup> was borrowed into the Judeo-Arabic lexicon and realized phonemically as FDY'R. In both phonemical and semantic respects, a comparable lexical borrowing is the afore-mentioned *paṭṭaṇasvāmi*; semantically, *pati*, 'local chieftain', is a Sanskrit loanword denoting 'lord, governor', of a similar meaning to *svāmi* in the compound *paṭṭaṇasvāmi*. However, the phonemic shift resulting in FDY'R as derived from *pati* is less transparent and requires further explanations.

Firstly, it should be noted that in Dravidian languages an unvoiced plosive (e.g. /t/) in intervocalic position (e.g. between /a/ and /i/) becomes voiced (e.g. /d/), hence *pati* is realized as *padi*. Arabic- and Persian-speakers roaming in the Malayalam-speaking region would hear the realization of the word *pati* in its phonemic form *padi*. Secondly, Arabic-speakers realize the plosive /p/ as /f/, as in *fatansomi*, where the initial plosive /p/ (in *paṭṭaṇam*) becomes /f/. In Arabic, the plosive /p/ in loanwords may also be realized as /b/, as in Dahbattan (< *dharmapaṭṭṇam*) and Jurbattan (< *kharapaṭṭṇam*), where the medial plosive /p/ becomes /b/.<sup>41</sup>



The alteration /p/ > /b/ is a result of the same phonemic shift /t/ > /d/ realized in *pati* > *padi*. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the term *pati* would be pronounced as *fadi* by an Arabic-speaker and, hence, transcribed into the Hebrew script as FDY (פדי).

Thirdly, the final segment of the term, -'R (ר) is probably derived from an honorific morpheme *-ār*, commonly added in Dravidian languages to titles and names for conveying respect. There are several instances of loanwords in Judeo-Arabic, where א (') marks a long vowel /ā/, as in the word T'LM (תאלם) that is derived from the Malayalam *tālam*, 'metal plate'.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in the name of Abraham b. Yijū's brother in law, Nāyar, /ā/ is represented as /'/: N'YR (נאיר).<sup>43</sup> The morpheme *-ār* is used in the Kollam copper plates in its primary function to mark the plural animate form of *paḷḷi*, 'village', denoting the community members of the new settlement established by Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso: *paḷḷi-y-ār*, 'people of the *paḷḷi*'.<sup>44</sup> Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the title *pati* spelled with no honorific markers in the Kollam copper plates was realized in the spoken language with the honorific title, *patiyār* (realized as *padiyār*). That must have been the title that was heard by the foreign traders and, consequently, realized as *fadiyār* by Arabic speakers and represented as FDY'R in Judeo-Arabic orthography.

#### *The Semantic Derivation from Pati to Fadiyār*

The Old Malayalam term *pati* and the Judeo-Arabic term *fadiyār* differ in their denotations. The first denotes a village chief, the second refers to a shipowner. Nevertheless, both *pati* and *fadiyār* denote an administrative rank functional in the Indian Ocean maritime trade networks. Upon a closer examination of the context in which these two terms occur, they seem to mirror each other. In the copper plates, *pati* is attributed to two officials participating in the ceremonious land grant to the *paḷḷi*, or settlement (rather than church), represented by Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso. According to M.G.S. Narayanan, the *pati* is the chief or leader of several families (*kuṭi-pati*).<sup>45</sup> In a close reading of the statements regarding the agency of Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso, his group leadership becomes apparent; clearly he leads the establishment of a new community of 'families' (*kuṭi*) composed of the land tenants specified in the grant.

Notably, the land is granted (*kuṭutta*) to the *paḷḷi* after Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īso establishes (*ceyviccu*) the market-town (*i-nnagaram*) in a ritual of sprinkling water:

That is the land given to Tarissāppaḷḷi, established by Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo, who sprinkled water over [and consecrated] the market-place.<sup>46</sup>

The statement regarding the agency of Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo can be analyzed as a temporal or causal clause: *maruvāṇ sapīriśo ceyviccu*, “after/because Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo established [it]”, subordinated to the main clause which is impersonal: *tarissāppaḷḷikku kuṭutta bhūmiy āvatu*, “this is the land given to the Tarissāppaḷḷi”, in which the agency of granting land is implicitly understood as the Kollam ruler, Ayyaṇ Aṭikaḷ Tiruvaṭikaḷ.

Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo is further modified by another subordinate clause: *innakaram kaṇṭu nīr-erra*, “who consecrated this market-town with water”. In this context, the list of West Asian names (Arabs and Persians) can be understood as signifying the group of merchants having right over the newly-established *paḷḷi*, its lands and the tenants attached to it. They may or may not have been settled in the Tarissāppaḷḷi permanently, they must have had, though, an ongoing and long-term attachment to the place, or else their names would not have been engraved for generations to come on the inscription. I would speculate on the basis of the above reading, that the establishment of Tarissāppaḷḷi is *subsequent* to the establishment of the market town (*nagaram*). The land is granted to Tarissāppaḷḷi with the purpose of supporting the market town in accordance with the interests of the contemporaneous ruling elites in the region.

More than anything else, the inscription attests to forming bonds between the different social, political and ethnic entities thus marking the onset of a maritime trade network. Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo is to be understood in this context as a node in a trade network emerging in and around Kollam. Being the leader of a new settlement, though, he must have been assigned a rank that was identical or similar to that of a *pati*. Though the official title of Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo remains unspecified in the Kollam copper plates, his role as the leader or chieftain of the merchant groups *añcuvaṇṇam* and *maṇigrāmam* is understood from the context, plausibly relating him to the role of *pati* of the settlement of traders, in whose name they receive their tenth share of the land-tenants revenue.

There is more circumstantial evidence to support the postulation that Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo was equal in status to a *paḷḷi-pati*, or settlement leader;<sup>47</sup> the lands given to Tarissāppaḷḷi have their northeastern border attached to the lands of Punaittala, whose *pati* is included in the agreement.

Another *pati* is included possibly because he too owns estates that border Tarissāppalli as well.<sup>48</sup> The two *patis* are mentioned along with several local princes and rulers present in the occasion:

The palace minister Vijayarāgadevar was present, as a female elephant was led [in procession] while sprinkling water [over the territory]. Ayyaṇṭikaḷ Tiruvaṭi, the crown prince Rāma Tiruvaṭi, the officials, the citizens, the Organization of Six Hundred, the *pati* of Punnaittalai and the *pati* of Puḷaikkūṭi all were included there.<sup>49</sup>

The individuals and groups listed therein are all involved in the agreement to grant the land to Tarissāppalli. They represent local political bodies that jointly integrated a group of traders into their society and economy.<sup>50</sup> In the same way that the settlements represented by these *patis* are explicitly named Punnaittala and Puḷaikkūṭi, so does the specified territory granted to Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo is explicitly named – Tarissāppalli. The grant is certainly on behalf of the *añcuvāṇṇam* and *maṇigrāmam* because they are entitled to the share of a *pati* (*patippataṇṇam*) in their newly-established Tarissāppalli.

If Maruvāṇ Sapīr Īśo was a *pati* in Kollam as a consequence of his nodal role in networking with West Asia, he was probably a rich merchant, perhaps even a shipowner, with business associates on the other side of the Arabian Sea. Can it be that the term *fadiyār* in the Genizah refers to a similar official in charge of West Asian trade groups settled in Malabar some three centuries later? The references to the *fadiyār* in the Judeo-Arabic letters indeed seem to mirror precisely that type of nodal function. In fact, these references clearly depict the *fadiyār* as a rich merchant networking from Malabar with business associates in Aden.

The *fadiyār* is mentioned in several Geniza fragments,<sup>51</sup> where the title is always compounded with the word *markab*, ‘vessel, ship’, specifying him as a shipowner. The ship of the *fadiyār* would sail back and forth between Aden and the Malabar Coast. It is mentioned in three letters sent to Abraham ben Yijū, a Tunisian Jewish trader. Ben Yijū lived for seventeen years in the northernmost area of the Malayalam-speaking region, where Malayalam intermingles with Tulu; both languages belong to the South Dravidian I language group.<sup>52</sup> Ben Yijū was cohabitating with a woman called Aśu, whose brother, Ben Yijū’s brother-in-law (צֶהָר), was his business associate.<sup>53</sup> Ben Yijū specifies Aśu as a Tuluva woman (תְּלוּוָא) in the deed of manumission and conversion that he wrote for her.<sup>54</sup> Since in several documents he relates to her brother by the

name Nāyar, it is plausible that both Ben Yijū's wife and his business associate and brother-in-law were members of the *nāyar* caste and, probably, Tulu speakers. They must have been fluent in Malayalam as well; *nāyars* are in fact more closely associated with the Malayalam-speaking region than with Tulunad.<sup>55</sup> The places mentioned in relation to Ben Yijū's business network are all located between Tulu land and north Kerala, where Malayalam (rather than Tulu) is and has been the dominant language.

All of the above suggests that Abraham ben Yijū was reasonably fluent in the Malayalam-Tulu language variation of the region, at least good enough to conduct business and to communicate with his extended family members and local business associates. Ben Yijū must have been well integrated in the merchant community of the region. Practically, he formed a node in a network of international traders from the Maghreb and Egypt via the Arabian Peninsula towards Malabar and Gujarat. It is therefore reasonable to assume that a title such as *pati* (along with the honorific marker *-ār*) became part of his business vocabulary, wherefrom it crept into the correspondences with ben Yijū's Arabic-speaking business associates and their correspondences in Judeo-Arabic. Similarly, Maruvān Sapīr Īšo must have had a functional role in forming a node in the network of other, earlier, West-Asian traders frequenting Kerala for business and often staying long periods of time; he might have networked with and for them as a *pati*, namely a local chieftain of a traders' settlement and market town, on the other side of the Arabian Sea.

#### *Fadiyār: the Indian Shipowner in Aden*

Goitein assumes that the *fadiyār* in the India traders' business letters was a Hindu.<sup>56</sup> However, the letters are silent about any religious affiliation of the *fadiyār*, apart from his role as a business associate in the network of Jewish merchants, as can be gleaned from the references cited below. Sometime between 1136 and 1139, Yosef ben Abraham sends a business letter from Aden to Abraham ben Yijū in Mangalore, where he mentions the *fadiyār* several times. The letter states that Shaykh Abu 'Ali Ibn Ṭayyib, an Egyptian Jew and a business associate of Ben Abraham and Ben Yijū, is on his way to Mangalore in the *fadiyār*'s vessel:

All this with the sack of silk and the sack of arsenic in the *fadiyār*'s vessel in the possession of Shaykh Abu 'Ali Ibn Ṭayyib Al-Mašri mentioned above.<sup>57</sup> [...] One [item] is in the *fadiyār*'s vessel in the possession of Abu 'Ali.<sup>58</sup>

Later on in the same letter, the title *fadiyār* replaces the erased name of Nambi Ravi (נבי רוי),<sup>59</sup> another South Indian shipowner networking with the Jewish traders.<sup>60</sup>

Thereafter, I strengthened my mind and realized (that) Shaykh Šāfer ben Faraj was travelling towards you that year in the [[NBY RWY]] *fadiyār*'s vessel.<sup>61</sup>

Yosef ben Abraham must have had Nambi Ravi in mind when referring to the South Indian shipowner sailing from Aden to Malabar. The *fadiyār* might, therefore, have replaced Nambi Ravi not only as the owner of the vessel transferring the goods and letters between the two Jewish merchants, but also as their South Indian business associate in their joint trade network operating between Yemen and the Malabar Coast. The juxtaposition of Nambi Ravi with the *fadiyār* in the role of shipowners is, arguably, derived from the social and political status of *nambis* and *patis* in medieval Malabar, where both rank as local leaders and landowners. However, while *nambi* is a caste name, thus easily identified as signifying a Hindu, the religious or ethnic affiliation of the *pati* is not inherent in the title. In other words, the *fadiyār* might have been a descendant of a West Asian trader who settled somewhere along the Malabar Coast a century or two earlier, like the Nestorian Christian chieftain representing *añcuvāṇṇam* and *maṇigrāmam* in the Kollam copper plates.

In 1139 (or 1138), the *fadiyār* is again mentioned in a letter sent from Aden to Mangalore, in which another Yemenite Jewish merchant, Khalaf b. Yiṣḥaq writes to ben Yijū about goods and personal items shipped over to him:

Moreover, I inform you Sir, that the basket of glass items and the 5 bottles are in the possession of the chief steward (*nākhudā*) Muḥammad, the chief steward of the *fadiyār*'s vessel.<sup>62</sup>

Clearly, the ship of the *fadiyār* carried on board a Muslim *nākhudā* in charge of the goods. In their discussion on the term *nākhudā*, Goitein and Friedman note that in this letter the *nakhudā* serves as the chief steward of the vessel, which belongs to the *fadiyār*.<sup>63</sup> They further compare the position of the *fadiyār* to another South Indian title that reoccurs in the letters, *fatansomi* (< *paṭṭaṇasvāmi*), which Goitein identifies as a title reserved for the head of a market place.<sup>64</sup> The association of the *fadiyār* with the role of a chief merchant in Malabar further strengthens the link with the role of the *pati* mentioned in the Kollam copper plates, for commercial and administrative roles would converge in the coastal society along the west coast of South India.<sup>65</sup>

The Jewish India traders were naturally most concerned with the commercial role of the *fadiyār*, at least as far as it is explicit in the letters. They were concerned enough to include a prayer for the safe return his ships in a letter sent to Abraham ben Yijū by an Adenese Jewish merchant, Khalaf ben Yiṣḥaq:

Therefore, receive all this, which is in the *fadiyār*'s vessel, God destined its safety.<sup>66</sup>

Of course, there were good reasons to fear for the safety of vessels sailing to India with precious goods and more often than not also carrying acquaintances and relatives.<sup>67</sup>

Ben Yiṣḥaq mentions the *fadiyār* again in a letter dated to 1146, where another Jewish merchant from Aden leaves his goods in the *fadiyār*'s ship, which demonstrates the relationship of trust and closeness with the presumably South Indian merchant:

[...] As for the '*māliḥ*' and the *kaḍa* 'a [bowls] which I sent with Maḍmūn b. Sālīm – when he disembarked at sea to the vessel of the *fadiyār*, he left everything in the [other] vessel.<sup>68</sup>

In his letters, ben Yiṣḥaq mentions several ships and shipments, including a shipment from Fandarayana (Pantalayāni Kollam) in the vessel of the *fatansomi* that, besides being a shipowner, was also the head of a market town, as mentioned above. Clearly, the *fadiyār* was a title similar to *fatansomi*; both denote a local chieftain or head of a market town on the Malabar Coast, who was also a shipowner exporting and importing goods across the Arabian Sea.

#### *The Ethnic and Religious Affiliation of the Pati and the Fadiyār*

The evidence discussed so far for conflating the *pati* with the *fadiyār* dealt with the occupational affiliation of these two figures. It is difficult to tell, however, what was the ethnic or religious affiliation of either the *pati* in the Kollam copper plates or the *fadiyār* in the Judeo-Arabic letters. In the case of the former, the title *pati* likely refers to an indigenous Malayalam-speaking chieftain, while at the same time it obliquely refers to the trade guilds *añcuvannam* and *maṇigrāmam*, that at least one of them was constituted of West Asian merchants. Chief merchants or shipowners commuting between the eastern and the western shores of the Arabian Sea could have been Indians, Arabs or Persians Unless the name of the individual in question is mentioned, it is impossible to determine the ethnic affiliation of the person. As for religious affiliation, it often remains obscure even when the name is mentioned.<sup>69</sup> The fact that West

Asian merchants and their Nestorian Christian representative were entitled to the *pāti* share of the land revenue suggests that a *pāti* need not necessarily be of Indian origin. Similarly, the evidence from the Geniza showing that the *fādiyār* was networking with an Arabic-speaking chief merchant settled on the western side of the Arabian Sea suggests that the person bearing the title might have been an Indian, possibly a Malayalam speaker (but not necessarily). The *fādiyār* might even be an Indian of West Asian origin, like Ishāq al-Bānyān, a person with Semitic name whose occupational or caste affiliation is typically Indian.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the *fādiyār* may have been a Hindu, like Nambi Ravi or Nāyar who were related to Abraham ben Yijū the Jew. He might have been a Christian, like his predecessor mentioned in the Kollam copper plates by name, Maruvān Sapīr Īso. He might very well be a Muslim or even a Jew, who inherited the title *pāti* as the head of merchants in Kollam.

It is, however, by circumstantial evidence that we can postulate the instrumental presence of Malayalam-speaking Muslims, Christians or Jews as nodal figures in the emerging maritime trade networks. Such personae must have been settled in port towns along the Malabar Coast, while serving as shipowner merchants networking with Arab-speaking merchants settled along the port towns on the western shores of the Arabian Sea. Several other sources, like travelogues, strengthen this assumption. In the twelfth century, for example, Benjamin of Tudela refers to Jews scattered in several towns around Kollam.<sup>71</sup> In the thirteenth century, Marco Polo refers to Jews and Christians settled in Kollam. He describes them as independently managing their business there and, perhaps more importantly, as maintaining their own languages.<sup>72</sup> Ibn Battuta, in the fourteenth century, refers to Muslims living under the patronage of a Hindu ruler (Tirawari) in Kollam.<sup>73</sup> Pantalayani Kollam in north Malabar, an important port town in the Genizah letters, is populated by Christians and Jews according to the fourteenth-century traveler Friar Odorico.<sup>74</sup>

Remarkably, Marco Polo's reference to language use attests to the ethnic and religious affiliations of the individuals networking between West Asia and South India. Indeed, it is difficult to tell what language or languages exactly were meant by Marco Polo in his reference to the languages retained by Jews and Christians in Kollam. It may be the use of liturgical language in ritual Hebrew and Syriac respectively.<sup>75</sup> However, it seems equally plausible to assume that Marco Polo referred to Arabic as the *lingua franca* used by them for practical reasons in

sustaining the maritime trade networks. The *fadiyār* might have been fluent in Arabic or Judeo-Arabic.<sup>76</sup> In another letter sent by Khalaf ben Yiṣḥaq to ben Yijū in approximately 1140 (or 1139), the *fadiyār* is mentioned among recipients of a letter regarding the delay of cardamom shipment:

I spoke with my Sir the most eminent Shaykh Maḍmūn about him writing to Ibn Muriḍa and to the *fadiyār* on the matter.<sup>77</sup>

The *fadiyār* might have employed a translator for communicating with his Arabic-speaking associates.<sup>78</sup> He might however have been an Arabic-speaker, perhaps even well-versed in the Hebrew script. Be that as it may, this last reference portrays the *fadiyār* as integrated in a language network encompassing the maritime routes between Aden and the Malabar Coast. Though it is highly likely that the *fadiyār* was an indigenous inhabitant of the Malabar Coast, it is impossible to determine his ethnic and religious affiliation with certainty. It is impossible to completely rule out the possibility that he was a local Jew, or what André Wink categorizes as ‘Mestizo’ in reference to the early-medieval indigeneous Muslims in Malabar (*māppiḷḷa*) as opposed to the ‘Creole’ transient merchants from Persia, Arabia and Central Asia (*paradeśi*). The terms *paradeśi* and *māppiḷḷa* are used in contemporary Jewish Malayalam; *paradeśi* refers to a certain community in Cochin (often misleadingly termed ‘White Jews’), whereas *māppiḷḷa* means ‘husband’.<sup>79</sup> It is likely that a similar distinction between Jewish ‘Creoles’ and Jewish ‘Mestizos’ existed at the time of the Jewish maritime trade network between Malabar and Aden, of which the *fadiyār* was an integral member.

#### *Towards A Connected History of Aden and Malabar*

In conflating textual evidence in Judeo-Arabic and Old Malayalam sources, I attempted to offer a small contribution to the broader field of studying the intertwined history of West Asia and South India.<sup>80</sup> In this I follow the path laid by previous scholars exploring Arabic sources for providing a view of India from West Asia such as Hussayn Nainar (1942), André Wink (1997, 2004) and Elizabeth Lambourn (2008). My approach is based on a close reading of references from sources related with the history of the maritime trade networks and originated from *both* sides of the Arabian Sea. Conflating sources related to the Indian Ocean maritime trade networks bears implications beyond identifying obscure lexemes; the derivation of the Judeo-Arabic



*fadiyār* from the Old Malayalam *pati* bears upon the social history of transregional and religiously-diverse trade networks operating from the ninth century to possibly as late as the fifteenth century and the onset of European expansionism. In this, I tried to address the problem of scarce documentation of the medieval trade networks, which seems especially acute in the case of Jewish history in the region, overshadowed by the extensive documentation in European sources since 1498.<sup>81</sup> Arguably, the Kollam copper plates offer the historical image of a transregional network that is mirrored in the Judeo-Arabic letters.

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<sup>1</sup> Malayalam is the official language of Kerala, a state on the southernmost west coast of India. It is currently spoken by approximately 40 million people, among them Jews who migrated from Kerala to Israel in 1954. Kerala Jews produced Jewish literature in Malayalam since at least the fifteenth century and their distinctive Jewish dialect probably began to evolve already in the thirteenth century (see Gamliel 2015).

<sup>2</sup> I avoid the more conventional term “Nestorian”, as it is considered problematic and even misleading. See Winkler and Tang 2009, 6-7; Finneran 2010, 200.

<sup>3</sup> For the Kollam copper plates see Narayanan 1972, 31-7 & 86-94; idem. 2013, 343-4; Malekandathil, 2010, 39-45; for an extensive survey of previous studies on the Kollam copper plates and a revised reading see Varier and Veluthat 2013; For the Geniza letters of India Jewish traders, see Goitein 1973; Goitein and Friedman 2008; Goitein and Friedman 2009, 2010 and 2013; Friedman 2013; see also Chakravarti 2015;

<sup>4</sup> Lambourn, 2015, forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup> Subrahmaniam 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Rabin 1994; cf. Weinstein 2000.

<sup>7</sup> References to Sanskrit, Malayalam and Persian words are scattered in the many footnotes in the “India Book” (Goitein and Friedman 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2013a, 2013b).

<sup>8</sup> Gamliel 2015, 507.

<sup>9</sup> Translation, analysis and commentary on the texts of the Kollam Copper Plates were produced by scholars since the eighteenth century (Veluthat and Varier 2013, 94-9).

<sup>10</sup> Gibb 2005 [1929], 238.

<sup>11</sup> Goitein and Friedman 2008, 141; Adler 1921, 58-9 (in the Hebrew section) respectively; cf. Nainar 1942, 44n66 for various spellings in Arabic.

<sup>12</sup> Malekandathil 2007, 269-73. See also Margariti 2009.

<sup>13</sup> The date of the composition is debatable. Hermann Gundert (1884) dates it in the thirteenth century, and Gupatan Nayar (1993, 47) presupposes a later, fourteenth century date. M. G. S. Narayanan (2006) argues for a later, post-sixteenth century, date. The reason for assuming that the composition predates the fifteenth century is related to its style and linguistic register that is typical of the genre called *pāṭṭa*, which ceased to be productive by the fourteenth century (Freeman 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Champakalakshmi 2001; Subbarayalu 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Subbarayalu 2009, 161; Narayanan 2013, 278.

<sup>16</sup> Narayanan 2013, 279 and 297 fn. 119; cf. Ray 2004, 51.

<sup>17</sup> I am told that in Persian too the lexeme *anjuman* does not connote trade (Kianoosh Razia, personal communication 15/08/2016).

<sup>18</sup> באניאנין, as in TS NS J 1v, line 2; Friedman 2016, 37, 56; cf. Margariti 2014, 49.

<sup>19</sup> I am grateful to Sunish George Alumkkal for drawing my attention to this convincing etymology, see MacKenzie 1983, 82. István Perczel suggested in a personal communication (3/1/2017) that the term may have been derived from the Syriac *trīšā*, ‘correct, straight’, though he admits that it is not used as an appellation for churches. M.G.S. Narayanan (2013, 343 and 358 note 51) suggests other possible derivations, all of them related with specifically Christian terms, though indirectly so. The New Early Persian etymology is thus the most convincing.

<sup>20</sup> Narayanan 1972, 31-7; Veluthat 2008, 203.

<sup>21</sup> Ray 2004, 41.

<sup>22</sup> Gundert 1995 [1872], 634; Fabricius 1972 [1779], 264.

<sup>23</sup> Venugopala Panicker was the first to point out to me that *paḷli* in the context of the Kollam copper plates can also mean a village (in a personal communication 2009). See also Monier-Williams 2008 [1872], 610; Apte 2014 [1890], 605.

<sup>24</sup> Text in Veluthat and Varier 2013, 109-111. Cf. Lambourn, forthcoming.

<sup>25</sup> See Margariti 2014; see also Lambourn forthcoming.

<sup>26</sup> Carter 2008; while there is evidence for the involvement of Christian merchants and institutions in Indian Ocean maritime trade during the heydays of the Sassanid empire, the evidence drastically dwindles after the eighth century. See Moffet, 266-84.

<sup>27</sup> For more on the names and the meaning of the signatures, see <http://849ce.org.uk/legal-worlds-and-legal-encounters/>

<sup>28</sup> For Maruvāṇ as derived from Mehervan, see Modi 1928; see also Joseph 1928, 48. István Perczel suggests to read Sapīr as derived from the Syriac sapīr, ‘scribe; erudite’ (personal communication, 20/9/2015); see also Lambourn, forthcoming.

<sup>29</sup> Perczel 2006, 395; Malekandathil 2010, 51.

<sup>30</sup> My translation is based on the transcription in Varier and Veluthat 2013, 109: *iraṇṭu kuṭi [eru]viyarum oru kuṭi taccarum āḷuṭaiya pūmikka kārāḷar nālu kuṭi vellāḷarum ivvaṇaivaru tevarkku naṭuvaṇa naṭṭu iṭuvaṇa iṭṭu paḷḷikkum eṇṇaikkum marṛum veṇṭuṇ kaṭaṇ kuṛavu vārāṭey ceyya-kaṭavar āka*. Kesavan Veluthat (2009, 258) associates the religious affiliation of the *paḷli* based on the mention of *tēvar*, ‘God’ in the above phrase. However, the deity is not clearly specified as Christian and *tēvar* can also be understood as a plural noun, ‘gods’ (-r is a plural marker that is used also as an honorific marker); the tenant laborers provided with the land grant are said to first produce agricultural yield for the God or the gods (*tēvarkku*), while assuring that they provide supplies like oil and other necessities to the *paḷli* (cf. Narayanan 1972, 34; see also Varier and Veluthat 2013, 104). Notably, the designation ‘Christian’ (*tarisā*) is absent from this verse.

<sup>31</sup> We began to hear again of Christians in the region only in the mid thirteenth century, and that too based on somewhat dubious testimonies in medieval travelogues. See Mingana 1926, 462-3.

<sup>32</sup> Malekandathil 2010, 55 footnote 1.

<sup>33</sup> For example, in the Gaṇapeśvaram Inscription dated 1231 (Epigraphia Indica III 1979, number 15), the term *pallī* refers to a village called Goṇṭu granted by king Gaṇapati to one Nārāyaṇa, clearly a Hindu by name: *nārāyaṇāya*



*tasmai ... patiḥ prādāt ... svāmitvaṃ cāpi goṇṭu-pallīnām* (Ibid., 87), “The king gave to that Nārāyaṇa ownership over the villagers of Goṇṭu.”

<sup>34</sup> That the term *paḷḷi* was associated in Kerala with Buddhists even as late as the fourteenth century, can be seen in the usage *paḷḷimār*, ‘Buddhists’, in the Old Malayalam *kramadīpika* (stage manual) of the Sanskrit comedy Bhagavadajjukam: *paḷḷiyil cenru paḷḷi putappūtuñ-caitēñ ñāñ. piñne aviṭe a-cceṛumakkaḷ uñṭa paḷḷimār, avarkk’ oru divasattil orikkalē ūṇuḷḷū* [I reached the Buddhist temple and joined the Buddhist path. Then, there are those slaves there, the Buddhists; they eat only once a day] (Pisharodi 2001, 78). For the use of the term *paḷḷi* in inscriptions referring to Jain merchant communities in Kerala, see Narayanan 1972, 9-22.

<sup>35</sup> Contrarily to the Kollam copper plates, the Muyirikkoṭṭ inscription is very brief, it specifies no land grant or trade privileges and it does not contain any signatories other than the King’s courtiers and officials. MGS Narayanan (2009) speculates that the Jewish copper plates are more closely related with political maneuvers of the local rulers rather than with the trade networks of that time. For more on the Jewish copper plates see Narayanan 1972 and *idem*. 2009. See also Gamliel, forthcoming.

<sup>36</sup> cf. Prabha Rai 2004.

<sup>37</sup> *nāluvātil-akattum vilkkum pūmi-y-āka kārāṇmaik koṭukkum eṭukkuñ ko-ppatavāraṇ koyil koṇṭu patippatavāram aṇcuvaṇamum maṇikkirāmamum ṇkoḷvat-āka* (3:1, 47-8 as transcribed in Varier and Veluthat 2013, 110). The translation is: That which is sold within the fort and that which is revenue income and outcome of the land – after the the palace receives the king’s tenth, the *aṇcuvaṇam* and *maṇigrāmam* will receive the chieftain’s (*pati*) share; Cf. Malekandathil 2007, 262; Veluthat 2009, 203.

<sup>38</sup> Goitein and Friedman 2010 II, 42-45

<sup>39</sup> Chakravarti 2000, 46-48; Champakalakshmi 2001, 341

<sup>40</sup> Narayanan 2013, 206.

<sup>41</sup> These places are currently known as Dharmatam and Karipātt respectively (Narayanan 2013, 345).

<sup>42</sup> Lambourn 2014, 368-9.

<sup>43</sup> Nāyar is in fact a caste name, possibly used by Ben Yijū as a personal name rather than a title (for an anthropological description of the caste and its occupational traditions, see Gough 1961; Fuller 1975; see also note 54 below).

<sup>44</sup> Kollam copper plates, second plate, 2:30-31 (text in Varier and Veluthat 2013, 110).

<sup>45</sup> Narayanan 1972, 93.

<sup>46</sup> *innakaram kaṇṭu nir-eṛra maruvāñ sapīriśo ceyviccu tarissāppaḷḷikku kuṭutta bhūmiy āvatu* (2, 1:17-18 in Varier and Veluthat 2013, 109). My translation is based on syntactic analysis that differs from M. G. S. Narayanan’s translation: “This is the land which Maruvāñ Sapīr Īśo, who received this *nagaram* with a libation of water, presented to the church of Tarsā.” (Narayanan 1972, 92).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *paḷḷi-pati*, ‘lord of the settlement’, in Sanskrit (Monier Williams 2008 [1872], 610).

<sup>48</sup> The lands given to Tarissāppaḷḷi are allotted so that the ocean is their western border and the palace is their southeastern border. The grove (*toṭṭam*) of one Aṇṭilaṇ of Punaittala is in the northeast of Tarissāppaḷḷi, between Vayalkkāṭṭ in the east and Tōraṇattōṭṭam in the north. One or both of the latter places may have been under the authority of the *pati* of Puḷakkuṭi (2:1, 22-25, 2:2, 26-27, in Varier and Veluthat 2013, 109-10; cf. Narayanan 1972, 92).

<sup>49</sup> Second plate, 1:18-22: *koyil ati-kārikaḷ viyarākaṇṭevar uṭpa[ṭa i]runtaruḷi ppiṭi naṭatti nirntuḷḷiyoṭu kūṭa a[yyanaṭikal]tiruvaṭiyum iḷaṅkūru vāṇra rāmatiruvaṭiyum [ati]kārarum prakṛtiyum ārunūruvarum punṇaittalaiyatiyum pu[lai]kkuṭippatiyum ulppaṭa vaccu* (text from Valuthat and Varier 2013, 109). Interestingly, the place name Punṇaittala is suggestive of a maritime community settlement; it contains the name of the Alexandrian laurel (*punṇai* in Tamil and *punna* in Malayalam), also known as Calophyllum inophyllum (see Gundert 1995, 677; Fabricious 2002 [1972], 277), which was used in shipbuilding for constructing keels, masts and rudder posts (Arunachalam 1997). The place name can be translated as ‘The Punnai Place’.

<sup>50</sup> cf. Narayanan 2013, 192.

<sup>51</sup> TS 10 J 12, f. 5 line 1; TS AS 146, f. 12 line 3; TS 24.64 recto lines 4 and 6; TS 18 J 5, f. 1 line 19; TS 18 J 4, f. 18 line 37.

<sup>52</sup> Krishnamurti 2003, 20-4.

<sup>53</sup> Isenberg 1988, 29 fn. 19; Goitein and Friedman 2010b, 173 fn. 26.

<sup>54</sup> Goitein and Friedman 2010b, 165. The deed of manumission (SPIOS D55.10) is a formal document that Ben Yijū was obliged to produce in order to have his children recognized as Jews by his family and his Jewish business associates in Aden later on (see *idem.*, 1999; see also Friedman 2010, 171). Though he specifies Aśu as a slave-girl (שפחה), being a member of the *nāyar* caste, as the name of her brother and Ben Yijū’s brother-in-law suggests, it is unlikely that she was his slave-girl. Nāyars were landlords, warriors and rulers by their traditional occupation and matrilineal, which means that women were not formally married nor obliged to monogamy (see Gough 1961; Fuller 1975). Moshe Yagur (personal communication, 22/6/2016) commented that this deed of manumission dated to 17/10/1132 might have been compiled in hindsight, after Ben Yijū returned to Aden approximately 17 years later and faced harsh criticism regarding the Halakhic status of his children. If that indeed is the case, it explains why Ben Yijū defined her as a slave-girl in the document so as to justify her conversion in the absence of a proper Rabbinic court of law.

<sup>55</sup> Gough 1961, 298-314.

<sup>56</sup> Goitein and Friedman, 2010b, 128 note 78.

<sup>57</sup> TS 10J 12, f. 5 אלגמיע מע צרה אחריר וצרה אלזרניך פי מרכב פדיאר צחבה אלשיך אבו עלי אבן טייב אלמצרי אל מקדם דכרה, verso, lines 12-14 (transcribed in Goitein and Friedman 2010b, 91, translated in *ibid.*, 95).

<sup>58</sup> TS AS 146, f. 12 recto, line 3 (transcribed in *ibid.*, 93, and translated in *ibid.*, 99; see also Goitein and Friedman 2008: 581.

<sup>59</sup> NBY is derived from Nambi, a generic term referring to a sub-caste among the land-owning Nāyar castes (Gough 1961, 387-8). RWY is most probably the common name Ravi, rather than Roy as postulated in Goitein and Friedman (2008, 148). That the name Ravi was common in Medieval Kerala is attested, for example, in the aforementioned Kollam copper-plates grant, in the given name of the king of Venad (*vēṇāṭ*), Sthāṇu Ravi (Narayanan 1972, 32).

<sup>60</sup> Goitein and Friedman 2010a, 43-4.

<sup>61</sup> TS 10 J 12 f. 5 (line 2 edges) and TS 10 J 12, f. 5 verso, line 1 (transcribed in Goitein and Friedman 2010b, 92, .

<sup>62</sup> כדלך אעלם מולאי אן אלסלה אלזגאג ואלה אלקנאני צחבת אלנאכדא מחמד נאכדה מרכב אלפדיאר TS 24.64 verso, lines 1-2 (transcribed in Goitein and Friedman 2010b, 120, translated *ibid.*, 128).

<sup>63</sup> Goitein and Friedman 2010a, 24.

<sup>64</sup> Goitein and Friedman 2010b, 128, fn. 78.

<sup>65</sup> Chakravarti 2000, 41.

<sup>66</sup> פיקבץ מולאי גמיע דלך והו פי מרכב אלפדיאר כתב אללה סלא[מתה] TS 24.64, recto line 6 (transcribed in Goitein and Friedman, 2010b, 120; translated *ibid.*, 129).

<sup>67</sup> See Goitein and Friedman 2010a, 53-9.

<sup>68</sup> TS 18 J 2 f.7 verso, line 2 (transcribed in Goitein and Friedman 2010a, 147; see also *Ibid.*, 151-2 footnote 37; cf. Wink 1997, 275-80..  
<sup>69</sup> Margariti 2014, 45-9.

<sup>70</sup> TS 18 J 2 f.7 verso, line 2 (transcribed in Goitein and Friedman 2010a, 147; see also *Ibid.*, 151-2 footnote 37; cf. Wink 1997, 275-80..  
<sup>71</sup> Adler 1964 [1907], 58-9 [for the Hebrew]; 64-5.

<sup>72</sup> Masefield 1929 [1908], 376-8.

<sup>73</sup> Gibb 2005 [1929], 238.

<sup>74</sup> Yule 1966 [1914], 133-4.

<sup>75</sup> Evidence for the use of Hebrew among Jews in Kerala at the time exists in at least two references in medieval Hebrew literature; Maimonides writes to the wise men of Lunil his Mišneh Torah reached as far as India (Lichtenberg 1859, 44). It may be argued that this reference does not necessarily refer to the Malayalam-speaking region. The second reference in Benjamin of Tudela, however, cannot be questioned for Benjamin states that it is in and around Kollam that some local Jews have the Pentatuch and a little bit of Talmud (Adler 1964, 64-5). For the use of Syriac among the St. Thomas Christians, see Perczel 2006, 398-9; cf. Lambourn forthcoming.

<sup>76</sup> cf. Goitein and Friedman 2008, 24-5 and fn. 60.

<sup>77</sup> וקד תכלמת מע מולאי אלשיך אלאגל מצמון פי אמר אלמכאתבה אלי אבן אלמריצה ואלי אלפדיאר פי דלך T-S 1 8 J 5.1 line 19; (transcribed in Goitein and Friedman 2010b, 133; translated *Ibid.*, 136).

<sup>78</sup> As noted by an anonymous reviewer and by Mahmood Kooria who read an earlier version of this paper

<sup>79</sup> For Jewish Malayalam, see Gamliel 2010, *idem.* 2013b; *idem.*, 2015; cf. Malekandathil 2007, 261.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Subrahmaniam 2010.

<sup>81</sup> cf. Patel 2004, 7; see also Gamliel forthcoming.